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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2179  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
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RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 4724  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2522  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2387  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2972  
RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHINGTON DC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3259

UNCLAS ASHGABAT 000102

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, EUR/ACE, INL  
DUSHANBE FOR DEA  
MOSCOW FOR DEA  
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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [SNAR](#) [TX](#) [AORC](#)  
SUBJECT: STRAIGHT TALK BETWEEN TURKMENISTAN'S STATE  
COUNTERNARCOTICS SERVICE AND UNODC

REF: 08 ASHGABAT 130

¶1. (SBU) Chairman of the State Counternarcotics Service (SCNS), Col. Murat Islamov, told UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Project Coordinator, Ercan Saka, at an Imamnazar Border Crossing Checkpoint Project Steering Committee meeting on January 15 that Turkmenistan is not a narcotics smuggling transit country and insisted that Turkmenistan's fight against narcotics is succeeding, noting that the government has strengthened its borders. (COMMENT: Post does not believe Chairman Islamov's assertion that Turkmenistan is not a narcotics transit country. Furthermore, it contradicts what other Turkmen officials, including President Berdimuhamedov, have said to U.S. officials. END COMMENT.) Saka responded that a country's success should be measured in some way, and stated that he needs data to support funding requests and to continue funding.

¶2. (SBU) Saka specifically asked for seizure figures and the amount of Turkmenistan's annual investment in the fight against drugs. Islamov said that information regarding funding of Turkmenistan's military agencies is classified, but he adamantly insisted that Turkmenistan fulfilled the President's promise to UNODC Executive Director, Antonio Maria Costa, to fund counternarcotics activities with \$12 million (reftel). Islamov added that the SCNS has created six new analysis laboratories using U.S. technology. Islamov added that the current street price of one gram of heroin is \$100, inferring that this high price is an indication of the success of Turkmenistan's counternarcotics activities. (COMMENT: This figure is higher than the street price of heroin in U.S. cities and therefore this assertion is highly doubtful. END COMMENT.)

¶3. (SBU) Saka then asked Islamov for his views on further Turkmen-Afghan cross-border cooperation. Islamov said that going to Kabul for training is expensive and difficult,

adding that the two sides could continue to use the "flag system" on the border. (NOTE: The Turkmen or the Afghans can raise a flag at the border to indicate the need to speak with parties from the other side. END NOTE.) After Saka pressed that this was not the international standard, Islamov said that the government would have to discuss details of joint training programs at the ministerial level, adding that the proposal would be better received if the seminars were called "international" meetings.

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT: When discussing Turkmenistan's work in the fight against drugs, Islamov was adamant, speaking with raised voice and without stopping for air. Islamov finally agreed to provide seizure data from 2006-2008 -- even broken down by individual cases. Islamov also agreed to increase cooperation with Afghanistan by installing a fax and communications system using the existing Memorandum of Understanding for the Imamnazar border crossing station project, and to continue the Imamnazar project through the end of 2009. Saka said that Islamov emphasized the need to call Turkmen-Afghan seminars "international" because the Cabinet of Ministers is likely to consider "international" meetings more prestigious and therefore approve them. UNODC appears to be able to hold frank discussions with Islamov, which is valuable also for bilateral partners who leverage the UNODC-SCNS relationship. This interchange also reflects the pervasive difficulty of obtaining accurate information from Turkmen ministries and agencies. END COMMENT.  
MILES